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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 SARAJEVO 001547

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR (DICARLO), EUR/SCE FOR HOH/STINCHCOMB

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KAWC](#) [KJUS](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: BOSNIA - SREBRENICA: AN ISSUE DEFLATED, BUT NOT EXHAUSTED

REF: A. SARAJEVO 1503

[1](#)B. SARAJEVO 1429

[1](#)C. SARAJEVO 1404

[1](#)D. SARAJEVO 1174

[1](#)E. SARAJEVO 1028

[1](#)F. SARAJEVO 556

Classified By: Ambassador Douglas L. McElhaney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador and representatives from the international community July 11 participated in events to commemorate the 12th anniversary of the 1995 genocide that took place in Srebrenica. The commemoration followed a politically tense four months in Bosnia after the International Court of Justice ruled that "acts of genocide" were committed "in and around Srebrenica from about July 13, 1995." A concerted effort to address justice, security, economic and social issues impacting residents of Srebrenica, led largely by U.S. representatives or Americans representing the international community, helped deflate a Bosniak inspired movement for Srebrenica's secession from the Republika Srpska. This work prevented attempts by Bosniak member of the Tri-Presidency Haris Silajdzic to exploit the ICJ verdict for the time being, but we expect Silajdzic will seek to use the ICJ verdict to raise the political temperature over Srebrenica again this fall, perhaps by ensuring the issue is raised before a United Nations body. END SUMMARY.

Srebrenica - In the Spring

[1](#)2. (C) In the wake of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) February verdict that genocide occurred in Srebrenica, Bosniak political leaders, led by Bosniak member of the Tri-Presidency Haris Silajdzic, began a strident campaign for "special status" for Srebrenica, essentially calling for its secession from the Republika Srpska (RS). Bosniak politicians, working with local Srebrenica politicians, the ostensibly locally self-generated "Srebrenica Initiative Board for Secession" and victims' associations, threatened mass emigration from Srebrenica unless the demands for special status and for other measures were met. The Initiative Board, backed by Bosniak political leaders, created a tent settlement of "Srebrenica refugees" in Sarajevo, staged protests outside the Presidency, and even faked an attack on a Bosniak returnee in the village of Ljeskovik to gain public support for Srebrenica's secession. Victims' associations also threatened to cancel the annual July 11 commemoration ceremony and burials of victims from the genocide that took place in Srebrenica. (Ref F and E).

[1](#)3. (C) From the outset, the international community rejected calls to unilaterally redraw Dayton's territorial boundaries. Instead, under the Office of the High Representative's (OHR) aegis, the international community developed an action plan for addressing justice and security, economic, and social concerns of Srebrenica's residents. OHR appointed and the U.S. funded former U.S. Ambassador Cliff Bond as "Special Envoy for Srebrenica," and he facilitated the creation of the Bosnian-led Srebrenica Coordination Group. This group was charged with ensuring the financial pledges made by the State, two entities and several Cantons to Srebrenica are used effectively. (Note: Thus far, RS financial commitments to Srebrenica are the only ones that have been translated into concrete results on the ground. End Note.) Ambassador has led a visible public campaign to promote business investment in Srebrenica that has led to possible investments by four U.S. companies. (Ref C). Just before his departure, former High Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling also used his Bonn Powers to impose a law bringing the Potocari Memorial and Cemetery in Srebrenica under state-level authority. (Ref B).

Lajcak Comes In Like a Lion

[1](#)4. (C) On July 10, newly-appointed High Representative Lajcak

signaled his commitment to pursuing war crimes issues and to addressing the justice and security concerns of Srebrenica's residents by using his Bonn Powers to remove former RS Police Chief and suspected war criminal supporter Dragomir Andan

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from his current position as Deputy RS Police Training Director; suspending 35 active RS police officers, many of whom were from Srebrenica or municipalities bordering Srebrenica; seizing the passports of 93 public officials who may have been involved in the Srebrenica massacre; and imposing amendments to several laws that will make it easier to investigate and prosecute suspected war criminals. (Ref A). The suspensions and impositions represent the culmination of several months' work by the Principal Deputy High Representative, Raffi Gregorian. The Ambassador also took steps to enhance U.S. support for the State Court, including through the secondment of an additional prosecutor to the War Crimes Department. The justice and security justice sectors still need work, however. The BiH Chief Prosecutor continues to resist U.S. and OHR pressure to establish a clear war crimes prosecution strategy.

Srebrenica Secession Goes Out Like a Lamb

15. (C) Lajcak's announcement followed several recent developments that helped lower the political temperature over Srebrenica. In June, the Srebrenica tent settlement disbanded, and the majority of its occupants returned home to Srebrenica. At the same time, the Srebrenica Initiative Board dissolved and its organizers formed a non-political "Association of Srebrenica Genocide Victims" NGO with the stated goal of gathering victims of genocide worldwide to engage in information exchange and fight for human rights. Srebrenica Initiative Board chairman Camil Durakovic, previously so adamant about secession, recently told us that the actions the international community has taken since the ICJ verdict were "the most that could have been expected."

16. (C) Several Bosniak leaders also shifted gears and helped calm the Srebrenica storm, though Silajdzic and Social Democratic Party (SDP) leader Zlatko Lagumdžija were not among them. Party for Democratic Action (SDA) President Sulejman Tihic and Tuzla Mufti Husein effendi Kavazovic were among the most constructive interlocutors in June, working closely with the Special Envoy and the Ambassador to calm Bosniaks in Sarajevo and in Srebrenica. Tihic was instrumental in turning off the recent initiative of Bosniaks on Srebrenica's Municipal Council to unilaterally declare secession from the RS. Kavazovic has worked with family associations and members of the tent settlement to encourage their return to Srebrenica and to lower political rhetoric.

Bosniaks in Potocari - Commemorating July 11th

17. (C) It was against this backdrop that the 12th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide was commemorated. On July 9, Ambassador in his capacity as a member of the Srebrenica Foundation Executive Board, members of the international community and Bosnian officials attended the opening of the Battery Factory's Memorial Room which includes the personal stories and belongings of Srebrenica's victims. Following the opening, Ambassador addressed and then joined more than 3000 locals and internationals for several miles on the "March for Peace," a 75-mile hike tracing the route taken by Bosniaks fleeing Srebrenica in 1995. These events coincided with the visit of Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) who travelled to Srebrenica to accept the "Srebrenica 1995" award for his work to prevent genocide. Smith was presented with this honor by the Srebrenica Mothers in an awards ceremony attended by Ambassador, President Silajdzic, Minister for Foreign Affairs Sven Alkalaj, Grand Mufti Reis ulema Cerić and other Bosnian officials. On July 11, in the Potocari Memorial Center and Cemetery, the remains of 465 identified victims, the youngest only 13 and 14 years old, were laid to rest. More than 30,000 people, including the Ambassador, President Silajdzic, Croat member of the Tri-Presidency Zeljko Komsic, High Representative Miroslav Lajcak, ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte, Special Envoy Bond, Reis Cerić and members of the diplomatic corps attended the event. Serb member of the Tri-Presidency Nebojsa Radmanovic was on vacation, and no senior RS official attended the commemoration. Prior to the ceremony, Ambassador and several other officials viewed a secondary mass grave unearthed in Potocari just two weeks ago.

18. (C) Srebrenica Mayor Abdurahman Malkic and Silajdzic

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addressed the crowd prior to the religious portion of the ceremony. Each called for justice, but also recommended a tolerant path forward. Silajdzic refrained from making any inappropriate political statement, but Malkic had to be persuaded by Ambassador and PDHR Gregorian to cut a portion of his speech that accused the international community of sanctioning genocide and committing a crime against the Bosnian people by imposing the Dayton settlement on Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Note: Malkic did not strike the offending language from the written version of his statement, which he distributed. Malkic, a moderate and mild mannered

interlocutor, is not generally prone to harsh rhetoric. There is widespread speculation within OHR that Sarajevo-based political actors urged him to make the comments. End Note.)

9. (C) The 465 burials dramatically underscored the scale of the genocide in Srebrenica. Their internment brought the number of bodies identified and buried in Potocari to 2907 out of an anticipated total of 7,800. The International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP) with the support of the newly established Missing Persons Institute (MPI) (Ref D) continue to lead efforts to locate, exhume and identify the remaining 5,000 Srebrenica victims as well as another 8,000 persons missing from the 1992-1995 war. Uncertainty about the fate of those missing continues to impede the reconciliation process and enables both victim and perpetrator to manipulate details of the crime. Additionally, this identification process remains critical to bringing war criminals to justice. Forensic evidence uncovered in mass graves by ICMP scientists, for example, has been an integral element in ICTY court proceedings in the Hague.

Serbs In Srebrenica - Commemorating July 12th

10. (SBU) On July 12, Bosnian Serbs marked Serb Saints' Day (Petrovdan) and the 15th anniversary of the murder of 69 Serb soldiers and civilians in the Bratunac and Srebrenica municipalities of the eastern RS. According to the RS Government, 3,200 soldiers and civilians were killed in this region between 1992-1995. In a mass commemorating the anniversary, Serb Orthodox Bishop of Tuzla and Zvornik Vasilije (Kacavenda) noted that the Church and the Serb people sympathize with the sufferings of others during "the war that was imposed on Serbs." Vasilije said that Serbs are not collective culprits, and that "it is known who started the war and what happened afterwards." (Note: Vasilije is notorious among Bosniaks as the Bishop who blessed Bosnian Serb paramilitary forces before their campaigns in the eastern RS. End Note.) During the day, Serbs lined the streets of Srebrenica in black "Chetnik" T-shirts with photos of Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic and also wore distinctive symbols of Serb nationalist iconography. At one point, a Serb military unit lined the streets of downtown Srebrenica.

11. (C) RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik and other RS government officials also attended the commemoration events in Bratunac. In comments at the ceremony, Dodik said that "Serbs are not genocidal people and the RS was not established on genocide." He continued that the RS "is a homeland of those who suffered and therefore Srpska has a right to live" adding that there are also many Serb mothers who weep for their lost loved ones. Dodik also noted that he was "hurt" that members of the international community "who so often speak to us about justice" were not present even though so many had attended Srebrenica commemoration events the day before. Dodik's appearance at the event and his comments understandably offended many Bosniaks. The same day he also gave a nationalistic and inflammatory interview with RS television. (Comment: It is unclear why Dodik decided to make such a strong public demonstration of his "Serb" credentials. He has long been frustrated and angry with Silajdzic's incessant attacks on the RS, and may have felt he had to respond with more nationalist rhetoric of his own. Alternatively, he may have felt it politically necessary to counter his subdued reaction to Lajcak's use of the Bonn Powers against so many in the RS police. Regardless, his comments were unhelpful and further contributed to the deteriorating political situation in Bosnia. End Comment.)

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Comment - Srebrenica in the Fall

12. (C) After several months of hard work by the international community, mainly the Americans at OHR and the USG, fervor over Srebrenica is one the wane. As we head into the August holidays, we anticipate it will remain this way at least until September. It will be important to maintain the momentum behind the constructive Srebrenica initiatives that have been launched. With this in mind, the Ambassador plans to organize another business investment trip to Srebrenica, which will hopefully include European representatives. The OHR Special Envoy also plans an investment conference in October. Despite these and other activities, we expect Silajdzic will look for ways to again raise the political temperature over Srebrenica. He has repeatedly signaled that he plans to pursue the issue at the UN, for example, and we would not be surprised if tries to put Srebrenica before a UN body in the fall, either directly, or more likely, through a proxy.

MCELHANEY